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(54) Programmable power reduction circuit for programmable logic device

(57) According to the present invention, during programming of a programmable logic device, programming in formation corresponding to an input signal is loaded into a shift register. This input information is compared with programming information corresponding to a second, complementary input signal to determine if the two signals are used by the programmable logic device. If the two inputs are not used, a bit is stored in a memory cell indicating such nonuse. An input buffer is disabled when the bit in the memory cell indicates the complementary signals corresponding to that input buffer are not used.

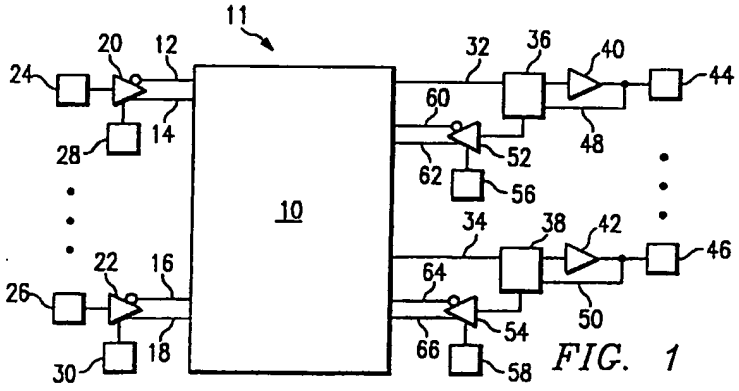

FIG. 1

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Description

The present invention relates generally to integrated circuit devices and more specifically to programmable logic devices which are configurable by a user.

Programmable logic devices are becoming increasingly popular in the electronics industry because of their flexibility. These devices allow a user to configure a standard part to perform a wide variety of standard logic functions. Since a single standard device can be configured many different ways, the total cost of using such a device in a system can be significantly less than the cost of custom design parts, especially when the product volume is not large. If changes or update are needed to the programmed logic function, some types of devices can be reprogrammed.

Typically, a logic function for a programmable logic device will not utilize all the input lines of the programmable logic device. These unutilized input lines are termed "don't care" inputs because they do not have an effect in the logic functions programmed in the programmable logic device.

As is known in the art, the components which define a logic device as well as the device itself consume power during operations of the device. The problem with the unutilized or "don't care" inputs is that the components corresponding to those inputs consume power during normal operation of the device, even though the inputs are not used in the programmed logic function. Consequently, the actual power needed by the programmable logic device to perform its logic function is unnecessarily increased by the components of the unutilized inputs.

Thus a need exists for a mechanism which shuts off power to the circuitry corresponding to an unused input, thus lowering the power consumed by a programmable logic device. Moreover, it is desirable that such a mechanism not adversely effect normal operation of the device.

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a method to determine if an input will be used in a logic device.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a method to disable an input buffer when an input will not be used in a logic device.

It is another object of the present invention to disable an input buffer without adversely affecting normal operation of the device.

Therefore, according to the present invention, during programming of a programmable logic device, programming information corresponding to an input signal is loaded into a shift register. This input information is compared with programming information corresponding to a second, complementary input signal to determine if the two signals are used by the programmable logic device. If the two inputs are not used, a bit is stored in a memory cell indicating such nonuse. An input buffer is disabled when the bit in the memory cell indicates the complementary signals corresponding to that input buffer are not used.

The present application contains subject matter in common with copending EP Application No 90314143.0 which is incorporated by reference hereinto.

According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a circuit block for use in programmable logic devices, comprising:

a storage cell;
an input signal line; and
an input buffer connected to said storage cell and said input signal line, wherein said input buffer is disabled if said storage cell has a first value, and is enabled if said storage cell has a second value, and wherein said input buffer comprises a NAND gate connected to said storage cell and said input signal line, a first inverter connected to the output of said NAND gate, and a second inverter connected to the output of said first inverter, wherein the outputs of the first and second inverters define true and complement outputs of said input buffer.

According to a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a circuit block for use in programmable logic devices, comprising:

a storage cell;
an input signal line; and
an input buffer connected to said storage cell and said input signal line, wherein said input buffer is disabled if said storage cell has a first value, and is enabled if said storage cell has a second value, and wherein said input buffer allows optional selection of an input signal line or a feedback signal line to be output therefrom, wherein the value in said storage cell enables or disables both the input signal line and the feedback signal line.

According to one aspect of the present invention, there is provided a programmable logic device comprising:

a plurality of inputs;
a logic array, connected to said inputs, to define a logic function thereof;
a storage element connected to each input for storing configuration information for selectively disabling its associated input; and
a plurality of outputs connected to said array.

Preferably, each storage element comprises a memory element which can be written to during programming of said device.

Each storage element may comprise an SRAM.

Each storage element may comprise a programmable read only storage element.

Preferably, each input is connected to said array through an input buffer, and wherein the associated

storage element is set to enable or disable the input buffer based on configuration information in said array.

According to a further aspect of the present invention, there is provided a circuit block for use in programmable logic device, comprising:

a programming buffer for holding programming data to program a portion of the device;
a plurality of storage elements connected to said programming buffer for storing a copy of data input previously thereto; and
comparison circuitry connected to said programming buffer and said storage elements for generating a signal indicative of a match between data in said buffer and data in said plurality of storage elements.

The programming buffer may comprise a serial shift register.

Each storage element may comprise random access memory which can be written to and read from during programming of said device.

Preferably, said comparison circuitry comprises a combination of logic gates.

Preferably, said storage elements store a copy of data input for a row which was programmed immediately prior to the current row.

According to a further aspect of the present invention, there is provided a circuit block for use in programmable logic devices, comprising:

a storage cell;
an input signal line;
an input buffer connected to said storage cell and said input signal line, wherein said input buffer is disabled if said storage cell has a first value, and is enabled if said storage cell has a second value.

Preferably, said storage cell comprises a random access memory cell.

The input buffer may comprise a NAND gate connected to said storage cell and said input signal line, a first inverter connected to the output of said NAND gate, and a second inverter connected to the output of said first inverter, wherein the outputs of the first and second inverters define true and complement outputs of said input buffer.

Preferably, said input buffer allows optional selection of an input signal line or a feedback signal line to be output therefrom, wherein the value in said storage cell enables or disables both the input signal line and the feedback signal line.

According to a further aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method for determining whether an input to a programming logic device will be used in a logic function, comprising the steps of:

loading programming data for a row corresponding to the input into a programming buffer;
comparing the loaded data to data previously loaded corresponding to a different row which is complementary to the first row; and
if the loaded data matches the row which is its complement, then generating a signal indicating that the input will not be used.

Preferably, said comparing step comprises comparing the loaded data to programming data used to program a row immediately prior to the loaded data row.

The method may comprise the step of:

if an input will not be used, disabling an input buffer associated with such input.

According to a still further aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method for disabling an input buffer, comprising the steps of:

storing data into a memory element indicating whether an input will be used; and
during operation of the device, if a memory element corresponding to an input indicates that such input will not be used, disabling an input buffer associated with such input.

The novel features believed characteristic of the invention are set forth in the appended claims. The invention itself however, as well as a preferred mode of use, and further objects and advantages thereof, will best be understood by reference to the following detailed description of an illustrative embodiment when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

Figure 1 is a simplified block diagram of a programmable logic device according to the invention;

Figure 2 is a block diagram of a logic circuit for disabling an input buffer according to the present invention;

Figure 3 is a block diagram of an alternative logic circuit for disabling an input buffer according to the present invention;

Figure 4 is a simplified block diagram of comparison circuitry used to determine if an input and its complement are unutilized; and

Figure 5 is a block diagram of a logic circuit for determining if an input and its complement are unutilized.

Referring to **Figure 1** a portion of a programmable logic device **11** is shown. Input pads **24, 26** are connected to input buffer **20, 22** respectively. Each input buffer **20, 22** provides a true signal line **14, 18** and a complement signal line **12, 16**. Only two input pads **24, 26** and input buffers **20, 22** are shown in **Figure 1**, but an actual device typically has a much larger number.

If the AND/OR array **10** is constructed using EPROM or EEPROM technology, the memory cell **28** should be an EPROM or EEPROM component as well. Alternatively, if the AND/OR array **10** is an SRAM based device, the memory cell **28** should be SRAM also. If desired, the SRAM memory cell can have a battery back-up, so that when the device is turned off the data stored in the memory cell **10** will be saved. Co-pending application Serial Number 502,572, which has been incorporated by reference, describes the design and operation of a preferred design for an SRAM based programmable logic device.

The invention is described in terms of an automatic method for determining whether an input signal is used, and then enabling or disabling an input buffer based on the use or non-use of its corresponding signal line. However, the enable/disable information could be programmed directly into the memory cell **28** when programming the programmable logic device **11**. Furthermore, the invention is not limited to use with logic devices containing AND/OR arrays. This invention could be used with other types of logic devices.

While the invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to a preferred embodiment, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes in form and detail may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

Claims

1. A circuit block for use in programmable logic devices, comprising:

   a storage cell;
   an input signal line; and
   an input buffer connected to said storage cell and said input signal line, wherein said input buffer is disabled if said storage cell has a first value, and is enabled if said storage cell has a second value, and wherein said input buffer comprises a NAND gate connected to said storage cell and said input signal line, a first inverter connected to the output of said NAND gate, and a second inverter connected to the output of said first inverter, wherein the outputs of the first and second inverters define true and complement outputs of said input buffer.

2. A circuit block for use in programmable logic devices, comprising:

   a storage cell;
   an input signal line; and
   an input buffer connected to said storage cell and said input signal line, wherein said input buffer is disabled if said storage cell has a first value, and is enabled if said storage cell has a second value, and wherein said input buffer allows optional selection of an input signal line or a feedback signal line to be output therefrom, wherein the value in said storage cell enables or disables both the input signal line and the feedback signal line.

3. A circuit block for use in programmable logic devices, as claimed in claim 1 or 2, said circuit block further comprising:

   a programming buffer for holding programming data to program a portion of the device;
   a plurality of storage elements connected to said programming buffer for storing a copy of data input previously thereto; and
   comparison circuitry connected to said programming buffer and said storage elements for generating a signal indicative of a match between data in said programming buffer and data in said plurality of storage elements.

4. A circuit block as claimed in claim 3, comprising means for storing configuration information in the storage cell based upon the comparison signal.

5. The circuit block of claim 3 or 4, wherein said programming buffer comprises a serial shift register.

6. The circuit block of claim 3, 4 or 5, wherein said storage element comprises random access memory which can be written to and read from during programming of said device.

7. The circuit block of any of claims 3 to 6, wherein said comparison circuitry comprises a combination of logic gates.

8. The circuit block of any of claims 3 to 7, wherein said storage elements store a copy of data input for a row which was programmed immediately prior to the current row.

9. The circuit block of any preceding claim 8, wherein said storage cell comprises a memory element which can be written to during programming of said device.

10. The circuit block of any preceding claim, wherein said storage cell comprises a SRAM.

11. The circuit block of any one of claims 1 to 8, wherein said storage cell comprises a programmable read only storage element.

12. A programmable logic device comprising:

    a plurality of circuit blocks as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 11;

a logic array, connected to said input signal lines, to define a logic function thereof; and

a plurality of outputs connected to said array.

13. The programmable logic device of claim 12, wherein said storage elements store a copy of data input for a row which was programmed immediately prior to the current row.

14. A device as claimed in any of claims 11 to 13, wherein the comparison circuitry is arranged to compare the addresses of the data in the programming buffer and the memory elements and to compare the data stored in the programming buffer with the data stored in the memory elements, wherein if the addresses are complements of each other and the data is identical, a comparison signal indicating that the input is not used is generated.

15. A method for disabling an input buffer, comprising the steps of:

storing data into a memory element indicating whether an input will be used; and

during operation of the device, if a memory element corresponding to an input indicates that such input will not be used, disabling an input buffer associated with such input.

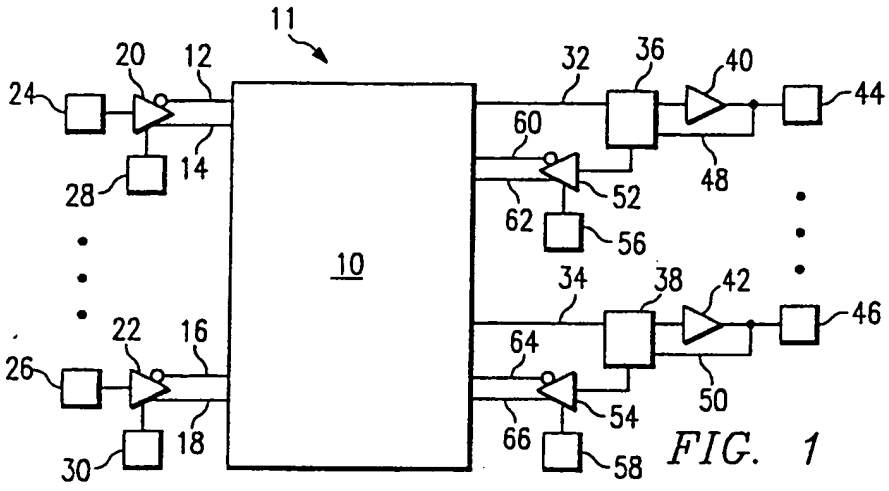
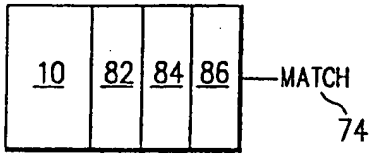


FIG. 1

FIG. 4



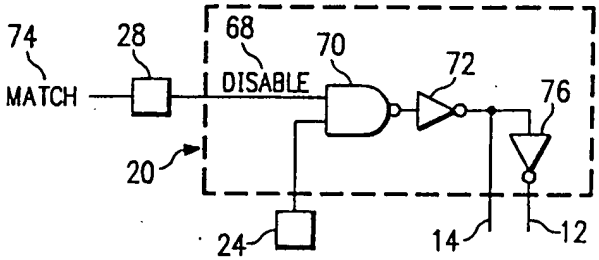


FIG. 2

FIG. 3

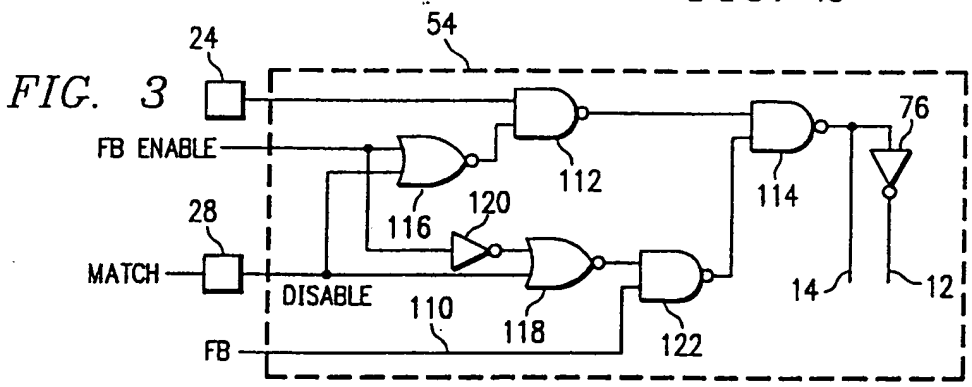
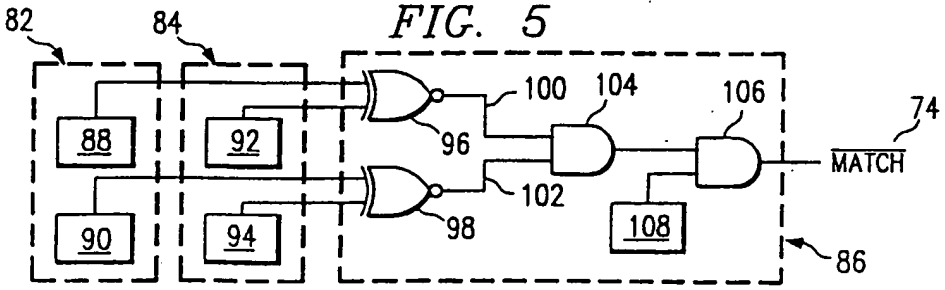


FIG. 5



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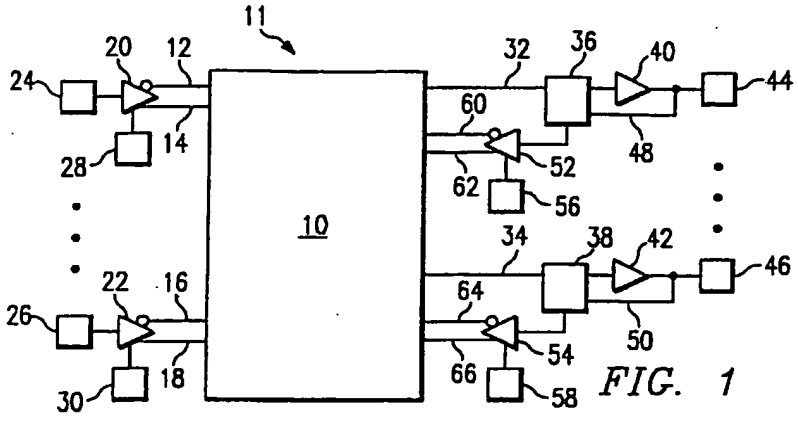

FIG. 1

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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 96 10 9371

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.6)
X	US 4 763 020 A (TAKATA AKIRA ET AL) 9 August 1988 * column 7, line 46 - column 8, line 10 * * column 8, line 48 - column 9, line 31; figures 6,7 *	1,2,15	H03K19/00 H03K19/177
A	EP 0 204 300 A (ALTERA CORP) 10 December 1986 * page 9, line 31 - page 11, line 21; figure 3 *	1,2	
A	US 4 839 539 A (TAKATA AKIRA ET AL) 13 June 1989 * column 2, line 52 - column 4, line 56; figures 1A,1B *	1,2	

TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.6)

H03K

The present search report has been drawn up for all claims

Place of search	Date of completion of the search	Examiner
THE HAGUE	18 September 1996	Blaas, D-L

CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS

X : particularly relevant if taken alone
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